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With the productions of the modern school of ballad poetry, the stomachs of more starveling critics have been lined, than with those of any other order, or in any other age. By tacit compact appears to have been

entered into, between the man who read for pleasure, and the man who read for a living. The former are anxious to be amused and to take the critic word for the allegiance of the taste as well as its object; the latter taking up the tale from each other, in regular subordination, in the order in which Peter Pindar describes the military stragglers ogling a nymph chaunt over and over again the same doleful story, of the wickedness of writing who will find food for their spleen; and the deterrent of the public who deem to be entertained in their own way.

The author, veering the tribunal by whose delight or indifference he must stand or fall laughs at the whole conception of Reviews from the mighty twin planets of critical illumination down to the miserable, catchpenny, anomalous handbills, that spring up in every quar-

ter where the multitude have money to throw away. Conscious perhaps that the costume he has adopted for embodying his thoughts, has its origin in open defiance of the canons of severe criticism, he is as careless as he is unable to defend himself. His motto is, and so it ought to be,

Vox populi, vox Hollings—

In the contest between his obstinacy and the clamours of the Reviewers, he is in no fear as to their outstripping him in the object of his most fervent and sublimest aspirations. If the goal be immortality, they make a dead set in their race, in the very inception of their career. But why should not he, by consulting the popular taste be swayed by their applause

Sperare hominum fugiens famam?

why should not he indulge the fine taste of his aforetimes? If, for the uncertain recession of fame which a compliance with jarring dogmas might ensure him, he were

to exchange the sweet reality of present celebrity, would he not deserve the reproach of madness, of which his cen=sors are so liberal.

It is not my present intention to enter either into a disquisition about or a defence of the nature and moral and intellectual tendency of ballad poetry. It is the taste of the times that has encouraged its growth. I can imagine no reason why moral instruction cannot be convey=ed, sentiment expressed, and genuine poetry produced, as well in this lower order of the epic, as in any other species of Poetry.

But what is the meaning of this incessant outcry about the ir=regular measure of ballad poetry? On the one hand, would these clamorous critics wish a story of love or magic told with all the stiffness of the digni=ty of the heroic measure.

—the full resounding line,
The long majestic march, and energy divine?

On the other hand, the old alternate rhymes of the English ballads, can hardly be employed without weariness in a long poem of many cantos. Even the old lines, which we have been presented to us by the labours of Percy, Ritson and others, frequently introduce superannuated words; they vary more from their regular metre, as they approach the modern days.

Ballad Poetry of all others, should seem to be least subject to the rules of Aristotle or any other critic. As to the uselessness of a change in the measure; it is a false charge against the measures of Scott, Southey & Byron, with all we follow at a humble distance, Erskine, Hogg, Sotheby, Miss Mitford, Cunningham &c, to vary their numbers to suit their own convenience in rhyming, without any regard to the correspondence between the sound and the sense. As to the convenience of rhyme we believe that the

experience of every poet will confirm the assertion that after a little practice has given a habit, one mode of versification, (not involved in regularity) is just as easy and as natural as, to the writer as any other. As to the observation, "if any one who has read the description of the battle in Marmion will undertake to say that the uniform succession of octosyllabic lines, or a constant alternation of rhyme would have been as appropriate a vehicle for the description, he will only prove that he is entirely incapable of relishing any kind of descriptive poetry whatever."

The painting powers of poetry are more called into exercise in the order of which we are speaking, than in any other except the epic. Ballad Poetry is indeed the dwarf epic. And if even this single power, it really is must commend it to the mind of common sense, that thing

power depends as much on the variety of its metre as on its accents, feet and external pauses. The skilful verse has greater capability of painting to the eye as well as the imagination, because it is not only free from the trammels of the cold faintly returning echo of sounds, but because it also admits of greater variety in the modulation of its accents.

Without aspiring to wrest the palm of sublimity from Milton, of fertility from Dryden, or of melody from Pope, Ballad Poetry, we are fully convinced, if it has or merits only pleased the present generation will hereafter give the lie to all the predictions of critics, by maintaining its place in the annals of poesy.

But it is urged against modern ballads, that they are not enriched with interweaving occasional lines of shorter measure, and alternate rhyme, in the body of octosyllabic poesy;

but that they introduce pyrrichs anapaests and ductyls; or, as a clever scribbler of the present-day has expressed it, with more classical felicity, they run into the "hop, skip and jump measure." The above remarks are applicable to this invention, which we have made of the others. Mr Coleridge in his preface to his last mistification (poetical) said that the structure of his verse was built on a new principle, to wit, the number of accents in a line, without regarding the number of short syllables, that is quantity. What could have put it into his head that this was an original discovery, it is so hard to divine as to make any sense of "the Christabel". Every poet who ever wrote in the Anglo-Saxon poetic measure, followed that rule.

At the close of the day, when the mercury is still
and mortals the sweets of forgetfulness prove,

When nought but the torrent is heard
on the hill
And nought but the nightingale's voice
in the grove—

Had some fastidious critic undertaken
to count the syllables in the above lines
on his fingers, he would have found an
unequal number in the three last, with
the first. Yet—what can be more
perfectly melodious?

The accents in these lines are so
strongly marked, that no ear can mis-
take them. It requires no extraordi-
nary dispensation of talent, to be able
to read this measure, and the others
constructed on the same plan. The
danger of a poet's failing in harmo-
ny, is small; but by some means
or other, common critics generally
stumble on the wrong accents, or else
are unable to discover the harmony
of verse, when they have pitched on
the right. Whether this is to be ascri-
bed to the sympathy between these

who have any portion of the soul of poetry in them, which prevents them from abusing one another; or to the effect of habit on the mind and ear of the Reviewer, making him look at every thing thro' a tortuous and jaundiced medium; or finally to his wilful and malicious perversion, is a question perhaps not very difficult to decide.

Although our language has no settled system of quantity, its accents are conventional and familiar with all who read much good poetry. There is no difficulty in finding them anywhere throughout the whole of that absurd mystery The Christabell; although it contains every number of syllables from four to a dozen.

Again then, we cannot but conclude, that what would be violent and absurd in an Epic, from the nature of our language, the author

ity of our classics, and the prescription of our ~~chaste~~ canons of criticism what would be misplaced in satire, and burlesque in didactic composition, may yet be admirable adapted to the genius and spirit of ballad poetry.

If it is not to be excluded from ~~the Lyric~~ our poetry, it surely may adopt its own costume; and while this has been done by Scott, Hogg Erskine and others, who are destined

Nonumum volitare per ora

to be read by cotemporaries and to be canonized by posterity, the brazen throats and adamantine lungs of a thousand Reviews will be blown and will vibrate against that costume in vain.

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Having nearly exhausted our limits, with the foregoing fragment from the relics of Dunbar, we shall conclude the subject ~~ourselves~~ in another number.